

Raise the Floor Alliance – Human Rights Documentation of Retaliation
Worker Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

Sample: "Thanks so much for coming here today to speak with me about your experiences working in Illinois. My name is _____ and I work with ____ *[describe your organization and the work you do]* _____. I'm here today because we are working with the Raise the Floor Alliance."

INFORMED CONSENT

Please read through the Consent Form with the worker. This Form goes over the purpose of Raise the Floor's research project, steps we will be taking to protect the worker's confidentiality, and what the worker can expect in the interview. Please answer any questions the worker may have as best you can. If the worker is comfortable with moving forward, please ask the worker to complete the "Before interview" section of the Consent Form.

AUDIO RECORDING

Before you begin, please make sure your recording equipment is working, has plenty of storage, and, with the permission of the worker, turned on and recording.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please follow these questions as closely as you can, while responding to the worker's personal story and needs during the interview. Each lead question (in **bold**) is followed by an estimated amount of time to be spent on that set of questions (the lead question and follow up) and a short description of the purpose of each set of questions.

- 1. We'll start by talking about the jobs you've had in Illinois. Can you give me a couple examples of the kinds of jobs you've had in Illinois?** *[5 minutes to put the worker at ease and get a sense of what jobs and industries will be covered in the interview]*

- 2. Now let's talk about what happens when there are problems at work. At the places you've worked in Illinois, what are some problems you've experienced on the job?** *[10 minutes to identify problems, such as wage theft, unsafe working conditions, work injuries, discrimination, and to get the worker's viewpoint on how workers, government and bosses respond]*

Follow up:

- a. Have you experienced serious problems at work but didn't say or do anything about it? Do you think other workers experience that? Why? Does this happen a lot?
- b. Have you ever complained about workplace problems to your bosses? Or to the government? Or do you know of others who have made a complaint?
- c. Have you experienced threats or been discouraged from raising problems at work? Have you witnessed other workers be threatened or discouraged? By whom and how?
- d. Do you remember ever having a government agency, like the Department of Labor, catch a problem at work without you or other workers reaching out to them? Does this happen a lot?

3. How do your bosses treat you or any other workers when you complain about problems at work or try to improve your jobs? *[15 minutes to get a sense from the worker about how they see their bosses responding to workplace complaints and whether they fear retaliation]*

Follow up:

- a. Have any of your bosses ever mistreated workers who complained about problems? Is this rare or common? What do you consider to be mistreatment?
- b. Do you ever worry about your boss mistreating you if you speak up about problems on the job? If you do, are you less likely to speak up at work about these problems?
- c. Why do you think bosses behave in this way?
- d. Do you remember ever having a boss that encouraged workers to raise problems at work? Is this rare or common?

4. Have you ever lost work or been harmed or threatened because you complained about problems at work? If so, by whom and how? *[15 minutes to get a personal story of retaliation and any experience with making a complaint about it with a boss or government agency]*

Follow up:

- a. How did this impact you? Did it impact your health? Did it impact your ability to get another job? Did it impact your family or community?
- b. Have you ever seen any other worker be harmed or threatened for complaining about work problems? If so, by whom and how?
- c. Did you complain to anyone about how you or other workers were treated? If so, to whom and what happened? If not, why not?
- d. Have you ever chosen not to complain about how you were treated for speaking up at work? If so, why? Do you think it's common for workers to not complain about how they're treated? Why or why not?

5. Are there some workers who are treated differently from others? Why do you think they're treated differently? *[5 minutes to get any stories about discriminatory hiring and treatment on the job based on the race, sex, or immigration status of workers. If prejudice is voiced, address]*

6. To wrap up our discussion, I'd like to ask you what rights do you think should be protected at work? *[5 minutes to get the worker's sense of rights and workplace violations, and find out if information about rights is available at work]*

Follow up:

- a. Where did you learn about what rights you have as a worker in Illinois? Have you ever learned about rights and how to exercise them on the job? Does this happen a lot?
- b. In your experience, are your rights at work being protected, or are they being violated? What are some examples?
- c. What would make it easier for you to speak up at work when you think your rights are being violated?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW: Please ask the worker to complete the "After interview" section of the Consent Form, and save the audio recording in a way that it can be shared with or picked up by Raise the Floor or NESRI.